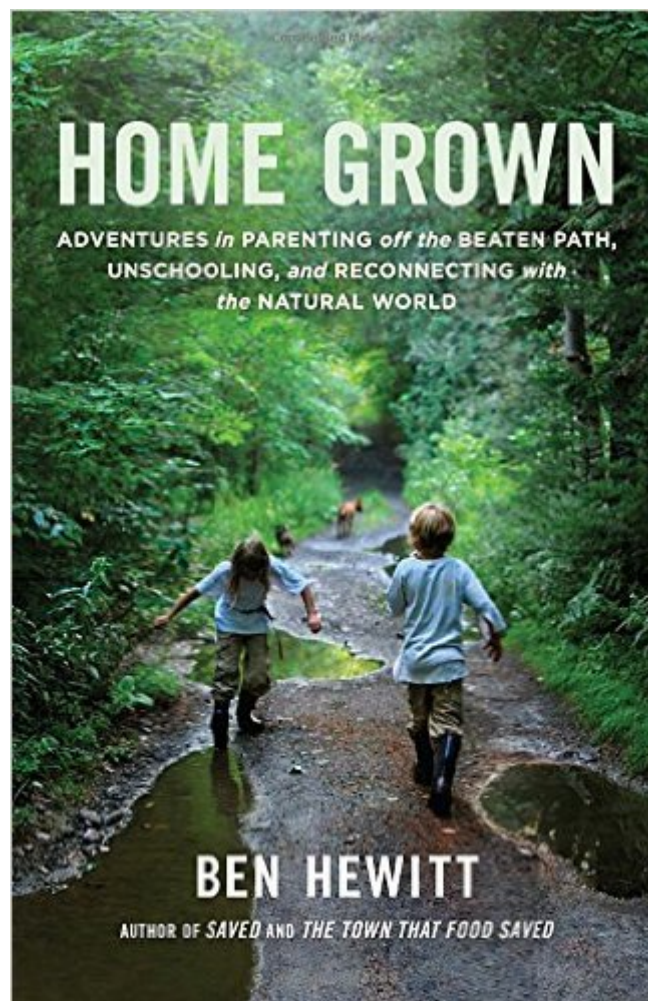


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Home Grown: Adventures In Parenting Off The Beaten Path, Unschooling, And Reconnecting With The Natural World



Synopsis

When Ben Hewitt and his wife bought a sprawling acreage of field and forest in northern Vermont, the landscape easily allowed them to envision the self-sustaining family farm they were eager to start. But over the years, the land became so much more than a building site; it became the birthplace of their two sons, the main source of family income and food, and ultimately, both classroom and home for their children. Having opted out of formal education, Hewitt's sons learn through self-directed play, exploration, and experimentation on their farm, in the woods, and (reluctantly) indoors. This approach has allowed the boys to develop confidence, resourcefulness, and creativity. They learn, they play, they read, they test boundaries, they challenge themselves, they fail, they recover. And these freedoms allow their innate personalities to flourish, further fueling growth and exploration. Living in tune with the natural world teaches us to reclaim our passion, curiosity, and connectivity. Hewitt shows us how small, mindful decisions about day-to-day life can lead to greater awareness of the world in your backyard and beyond. We are inspired to ask: What is the true meaning of "home" when the place a family lives is school, school system, and curriculum? When the parent is also the teacher, how do parenting decisions affect a child's learning? (And exactly how much trouble can a couple of curious boys gallivanting in the wild woods all day get into?) Home Grown reminds us that learning at any age is a lifelong process, and the best "education" is never confined to a classroom. These essays on nature, parenting, and education show us that big change can come from making small changes in how you live on the land, while building a life you love.

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Customer Reviews

Well. I have just written and deleted about 6 opening sentences that fell short of what I want to convey. Simplicity then. This book is so good. I read it in 1 day. I am at the brink of what to do regarding homeschooling/unschooling, veering strongly towards unschooling. This book sealed the deal for me. And yet that's not the point of it. It is one of the most balanced books I have read on the topic. I felt like I spent a few days in the life of, saw this way of life played out, and saw the beauty of it all. This style of education is RICH and FULL with limitless possibilities and numerous experiences. This book gave me full confidence that what I already knew instinctively- is the choice I should follow. It is not just about schooling though. I identified with many of the author's thoughts on living off the land, even if you are not personally living off the land, loving the land around you. His musings on parenthood were excellent and relevant. I appreciated the transparency and truth of how much work and responsibility is involved. The most overwhelming theme to me was contentment and peace in living a life true to yourself and your values. When I first started reading it I was slightly worried as it was very flavored with prose. I love prose, but I thought it might be hard to get through given the topic. Wrong. I was brought to tears numerous times because of the writing, but also because of where I am in this journey. It is brilliant in that you get one chapter of beauty and reflection, and one chapter of info and story, and he alternates between the two every other chapter. The chapters of reflection have beautiful art above the title, are brief, and add value. The layout is beautiful and flows well. My book is filled with circles, underlining, stars, scribbles, and thoughts I want to remember and reference back to. So much is given to you as the reader. I will say that though I do admire their choices and their happiness in them- I personally think it's OK to have a TV (not for cable, for movies and education), and for kids to have monitored by age media exposure. While I do think society and the media has many issues, I want them to be educated on that, and develop their own self-control and opinions over it. My kids have iPads and handle them beautifully without addictions or arguments, and rarely choose them over going outside or playing Legos, etc. Excellent. Memoirs are my favorite genre and this one does not disappoint. If only all books one picks up could be this satisfying.

Having read all of Hewitt's books and as a regular reader of his blog, I thought I knew what to expect when my pre-ordered copy of "Homegrown" arrived. As wonderfully inspiring and beautifully written as I knew it would be, it surpasses my expectations. Part of the appeal Hewitt's stories have for me is the similarities of his sons to my own two boys (though mine are younger - only 2 and 3 years old.) I have almost started to think of the Hewitt boys as my own boys' older counterparts and

this book gives me a glimpse into what may lie ahead for us. I particularly like the final essay in which Hewitt ponders his family's future and offers gentle suggestions for embracing a life as part of the natural world and finding your place in it. Of course, everyone's story is different and Hewitt very clearly makes it known that his family's choices are not right for everyone. I think his level of humility and kindness is rare in someone so clearly passionate about a subject. It would be so easy to become preachy even when advice and comments are well-intentioned but Hewitt never comes close to even a hint of condescension in his writing. His style is picturesque but accessible as if the reader is having a conversation with a good friend who happens to be a great story teller. While homeschooling, and even unschooling, are not as unusual an educational choice as they once were (here in NC, the number of homeschooled children just recently surpassed the number of children who attend private schools), there is still a lot of questions and uncertainty about this lifestyle choice among the general population. I recommend this book unreservedly to anyone interested in homeschooling, unschooling, crafting a life in harmony with nature, and those who just want to create a more beautiful world for their children to grow into - whatever that means to them.

Lace up your boots, grab a stick, and come explore the New England woods with author Ben Hewitt and his sons, Fin and Rye. Amongst the tall trees, small animals, and rich earth, you'll find the children's schoolhouse. But it's not an actual building, it's a natural workshop encompassing the surrounding area where the boys plunge, examine, dig, construct - and most importantly - explore the physical world around them. Through their daily journeys, the students have learned the lessons that THEY need to learn; their curriculum being entirely self-devised. From their own efforts, the boys have succeeded in being schooled by being unschooled. Hewitt poetically describes the transformation in an engaging story that transports you deep into the forest to a place where you may not want to leave. You'll realize you've been here before, a long time ago, when you'll recall the beauty and wonder of your own childhood mind. But Hewitt's boys can revel in their curiosity here, unchecked by teacher or parent. Through their discoveries in the forest, they've found their own path and are designing their own trail. With confidence and vigor they forge ahead, while the reader is left to pause and ponder. By the end of this colorful tribute to childhood and to his sons, Hewitt will leave you NOT where you began. It will be up to you whether you decide to go or stay. Whichever course you choose, you will revisit your own journey and find the crystals of knowledge you left there long ago. And you will find the truth that you knew the answers all along.

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